

# 26 *The Future is in Our Hands*

Maina Muchara

*Managing Consultant, Mucmar Management Concepts*

*Lecturer of Management, USIU*

*Email: mmuchara@mucmar.com or mmuchara@usiu.ac.ke*

## 1 Abstract

*A lot has been said and written about leadership theories and the effectiveness of the same. No other major contributor to organisational performance is focused on than leadership. But each individual is unique in her/his own ways. In the Kenyan context, the landscape has been turned upside down. From a male dominated sector where all vice chancellors of the public universities were men, now plethora of female vice chancellors can be counted from the public to the private universities almost in equal numbers. The performance of management of the various universities has ranged from mediocre to exceptional. Some management systems and leadership styles that could be replicated must be hidden somewhere. In this realm of knowledge, it therefore portends great danger if one was to prescribe a one-fits-all dose of the applicable leadership style in our higher education set up. But that is the very essence of science, to search and discover the discernible patterns that can be replicated across the line for posterity. Being the custodians of knowledge and disseminators of the same, the various complaints emanating from students, lecturers, staff and other stakeholders on how universities preach water and take gallons of wine in the field of management is a complaint that needs serious consideration. Further, having seen the problems that other learning institutions have had in management mostly traced to the fact that most administrators were plucked from class and given positions of leadership without orientation, then it behoves those in the scholarly world of management and leadership to synthesise some bitable bits that could assist those in positions of authority to appreciate the scientific approach to management. We conclude that time might have come when leadership in universities will not be reserved to academicians but to corporate executives capable of inspiring the whole institutions to great heights of performance excellence.*

## 2 Discussion

Managing and leading have constantly been used interchangeably. This usage has caused confusion and sometimes conflicts. Are we right to assume that a manager and a leader are the same? Is it then true that managing and leading are the same? Scholars are slowly coming to agree that these two are not the same. To contrast these two, we can loosely define management as the process of producing order and consistency in an organisation or personal level through planning and budgeting, organising and staffing, and controlling and problem solving. In the same context, we can look at leadership as the process of producing change and movement in an organisation through establishing direction, aligning people to the common goals and inspiring and motivating the followers (Northhouse, 2003). The two contrast sharply with what I call rulership, the aspect of ensuring total control and obedience of those beneath oneself through coercion and manipulation. In this context, those charged with the responsibility of leading or managing sometimes do get involved in the activities of ruling without them realising that they have become lords or rulers, lording it over “their” subjects who on their side, meekly assuage and massage the egos of their rulers.

When it comes to management and leadership in the higher education, we first note that there are 31 universities in Kenya: seven public universities plus constituent colleges and 24 private universities. We also have over 150 colleges and institutes offering certificates and diplomas (Wikipedia, 2009) making Kenya the largest higher education academic centre in East and Central

Africa. This phenomenal growth has been witnessed in the last twenty-five years and specifically after Moi University was established in 1984 followed by Kenyatta University in 1985. While the number of colleges and universities have grown spectacularly, the number of students enrolment per college has been nothing but phenomenal. A good example is the number of students in Kenyatta University that grew from 8,000 in 1997 to 21,500 in 2007. The other public universities have seen the same kind of growth after they started Module II or Parallel Degree Programmes for students wishing to enter the institutions as private candidates. To that extent therefore, one can safely argue that the public universities have become more private than public.

Though our focus for this paper is the management and leadership at the universities in Kenya, it is important to highlight that the governance and management structures of all public education institutions in Kenya are virtually the same. At the primary schools, the school committees lead, board of governors lead at secondary and colleges while at the university level, we have the Board of Trustees. All these bodies play the same role of providing leadership to the institutions or to exercise guardianship over the universities' and colleges' assets and resources, and to ensure their effective management, control and use. With the advent of the new approach to governance at the university, President Kibaki allowed other individuals other than himself to be the chancellor in several public universities except Masinde Muliro in western Kenya, a governance structure very similar to that of colleges was ushered in. However, the administrative structures including the councils and the professional departments of these institutions have not changed. These administrative structures are supposed to provide the managerial component in the universities.

The manager is required to recognise that the aspect of planning and budgeting will entail establishing agendas to be discussed and reduced to identifiable activities and action plans. These action plans must then be constrained with clear timetables and only then are resources allocated to accomplish the tasks. The resource utilisation will be accomplished through Organising and staffing where the manager will provide structures, make job placements and establish rules and procedures of accomplishing the tasks. In the controlling and problem solving sphere, the manager is required to see to it that there are clearly identifiable and measurable incentives to abide by the rules of the game, that they generate creative solutions and take corrective actions (Evans and Lindsay, 2005; Northouse, 2003)

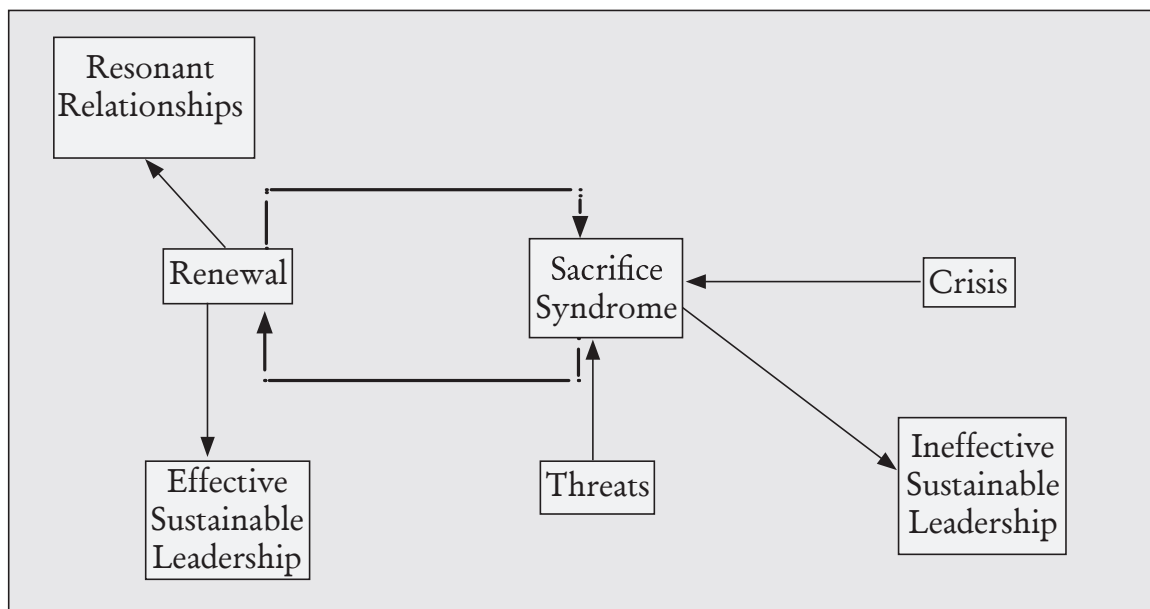
In the context of Kenyan universities, the management charged with the responsibility of producing order and consistency are the vice chancellors and her team of deans and chair persons plus the support staff made up of professionals in the various fields such as accounts and finance, legal, operations, ICT, security, PR and the like. Though support in nature, the duties and responsibilities carried out by these staff members are professional and more often than not, these staff members run the universities. Discussions with these members of staff show that there is a serious disconnect between the senior leadership of universities made up of vice chancellors, deans and chairpersons all drawn from the teaching fraternity and the administrators. A sort of love-hate relationship is observable. While we will look in details the cause of this disconnect as we get into deeper understanding of the leadership dimension of this paper. However, an important aspect to be noted here is that most administrators, though doing most of the day-to-day running of these universities, have lower academic qualifications than the top management teaching drawn leaders.

On the other hand, the most enduring aspect of universities is bureaucracy. The administrators seem to be too preoccupied by the controlling aspect of management to the exclusion of problem solving to the extent that some procedures that were invented long before for example the advent of computer technology are operational to date. Seekers of services will therefore be tossed from one office to another to get signatures that add no value to the end results. Others are situations like in one university where part-time lecturers have abandoned their pay after having taught and submitted grades to the university concerned. This particular university requires the same lecturer to put forward a claim for pay then chase it through various individuals though the same university. The university however, has no problem accepting and registering grades from the same lecturer for the students.

Should we really raise an issue on the above state of affairs when we can see quite clearly that the management is carrying out its duty of producing order and consistency? To some extent or technically speaking, no, they are just carrying out their duties the best they know how. However, what we note here is lack of effective leadership. It is important for managers to raise their level to leadership position where you produce positive change and movement. At this level intellectual honesty and decisiveness is paramount. Further, one must display high levels of dependability and consistency (Schoenberg, 1978). Dependability will be directed to one's superiors. That should the superiors need something done in the realms of professionalism; the person will do it to their satisfaction. On the other hand, consistency will be observed by the subordinates. That the individual will act in the same way for issues emanating from the same actions without changing depending on the individual concerned.

Effective leaders recognise that the first task in management has nothing to do with leading others but the challenge of knowing and managing oneself (Boyatzis and McKee, 2005). For Peter Drucker (2005), great achievers have always managed themselves and the trick to staying mentally alert during 50-year working life is knowing how and when to change the work we do. This entails first discovering scientifically what our strengths are, how we perform what we perform or understanding our personalities and what we value most and cannot do without. From here, we try and discover where we fit or belong and what we should contribute when we get there. Finally, we ask ourselves, whether we take responsibility for relationships by recognising that other people are as unique as we are and whether we are prepared for the possibility of another career away from what we are doing.

In the process, we connect with the deep value that guide us, align our emotions with our goals and feel good energy and excitement come spontaneously verifying that we are on the right track. This feeling of energy and excitement is cemented by compassion, not in the sense of charitable giving, but in terms of a benevolent attitude and predisposition to assist others (Boyatzis and McKee, 2005) that come in to add meaning to what we do. This brings forth what Boyatzis and McKee call resonant leadership where one is constantly in need of rejuvenation. For resonant leadership to happen there is need for sacrifice and renewal.



Source: Boyatzis and McKee.

Sacrifice syndrome occurs when leaders sacrifice too much for too long and reap too little. Disappointment sets in. When trapped in the syndrome, we slip into internal disquiet, unrest and distress so that dissonance rather than renewal becomes the default. For effective sustainable leadership, we have to be alert to “wake up” calls that make us aware that our lives have become something we do not want. We therefore have to regulate the cycle of sacrifice and renewal to

maintain the resources and a sense of balance. To do so, we are called upon to step out of destructive patterns and renew ourselves physically, mentally and emotionally. We must manage crises and chronic stress without giving to exhaustion, fear or anger by constantly finding opportunities in challenges and being optimistic. Finally, cultivate attitudes that would influence human action, balancing and appreciating the power of position with the cost of responsibility.

Having had a chance to understand ourselves and clarified the role or contributions that we are going to make, we are ready to delve into the nitty-gritty of leadership. On establishing direction, it is our role as leaders to create a vision and clarify the big picture and set strategies to achieve the vision. We then embark on aligning the people we lead to the goals by first being able to articulate and communicate effectively and without ambiguity the goals we are talking about. If the goals are understood, we seek for commitment and build teams and coalitions to achieve the goals. We then implement action that will inspire and energise the subordinates through empowerment and satisfying unmet needs.

The need for clarity of vision and goals is usually overlooked as we get sucked up with the-day-to-day running around. This usually sets up being trapped in what I call the curse of Moses. The curse of Moses is understood by first clarifying in our minds what Moses really set out to achieve. We do this by asking whether his intention was to get the children of Israel out of Egypt or to get the children of Israel to Canaan. As he is not around to give us an insight as to what his vision and goal was, we can only speculate. It is very clear that Moses was very effective in leading the Israelites out of captivity in Egypt. It is also very clear that Moses was a total failure in getting the Israelites back to their country Canaan. Having had a vision of getting the Israelites out of captivity, in essence running away, Moses was confronted with the hard task of fighting for Canaan from the tribes and for forty years, searched in vain for an easy route. Clarity of vision and goals could have prepared him for the war, or let another person, say a young Joshua, lead the children into war to reclaim their land.

Due to the level of mismanagement and apathy that public universities had fallen during the 24 years of Moi rule, the landscape is littered with corpses of Moses who have not understood that they need to drive the institutions into the competitive world of modern management. Days when the likes of Ngugi wa Thiong'o were hauled from lecturer halls to Kamiti prison for saying things that spies relayed fast and furious to their masters. Days when lecturers were thoroughly intimidated and therefore careful on what they uttered are long gone. However, the tactics used to manage and deliver traumatised children of Israel out of captivity are still being employed, and just like Moses, the vice chancellors are getting extremely indignant when "ungrateful" lecturers, students and staff start questioning the wisdom of some of their decisions.

Very few vice chancellors are available to staff without an appointment, leave alone sharing meals with students in cafeterias. This creates a sense of disconnect with reality and aloofness. The deans and other followers borrow from their vice chancellors and an atmosphere of arrogance ends up pervading the whole institution. Lecturers borrow from their deans and quality service such as returning projects and examination papers on time to provide feedback and academic growth in the students becomes more talked about than practiced. Others refuse to embrace modern technology such as use of computers, white boards and communication through email. Modern happenings have also taught us that some very senior individuals can be deceitful lacking the balancing and appreciation of the power of position with the cost of responsibility.

The Enron Scandal in the US shows that powerful leaders can make decisions for self-gain at horrendous costs and consequences to their subordinates. Enron employees lost not only their jobs but also their life-savings in their retirement funds as the paper shuffle to hide debt and promote company stocks went on. This was almost a replica of actions played out years earlier by yet to be confirmed dead or alive, Robert Maxwell as he raided staff retirements funds in his endeavour to create false impression of a healthy company in London. A pattern is emerging that shows that even these so called "decent" powerful people in positions of authority sometimes are downright con. We all are aware of the pyramid or Ponzi schemes carried out by Bernard Madoff for years where 65 billion dollars was lost by investors, may be the largest Ponzi scheme ever perpetrated, as well as



the largest investment fraud ever committed by a single person. One of Madoff's biggest investors, René-Thierry Magon de la Villehuchet of Access International Advisors, committed suicide around December 23, 2008, following the disclosure of \$1.5 billion in losses as reported in BBC News on December 24. It is therefore important to recognise the consequence of power on social judgment, emotions and behaviour and jealously guard against being taken on this garden path.

How those in power think about their subordinates determines when they will stray from ethical behaviour. Governance becomes a very crucial component of leadership. Effective governance will reduce the temptation to become unethical, as those in authority will expect to be questioned by people they respect and value. A huge omission on all the websites I visited when writing this paper was the governance page listing the board of trustees. Non of the public universities has a governance page while in the private universities, only USIU has. This shows that universities in Kenya do not take their board of trustees with great importance. Their power and influence in these institutions is minimal.

We define power from the interdependence theories perspective as the asymmetric control over another's desired outcomes may be tangible such as economic or intangible such as approval (Goodwin, 2005) so that we are able to see it as the capacity to enforce obedience or overcome resistance. From this perspective, we define leadership as social influence, which is the ability to alter beliefs, feelings or behaviour of others. Leaders or people in authority, politicians, corporate executives, grade teachers, with authority being the legitimate and recognised right to make binding decisions over others, typically have power, that is they have control over others' outcomes. How this power is exercised determine the performance of individuals and therefore the organisation.

The Kenyatta University case where students went on the worst kind of rampage since the university was established leading to the death of a student and enormous destruction of property has been explained by the way the institution is exercising power. Finally, the grades for sex scandals that have hit several universities are exercise of power derivatives. Another aspect of leadership and management pertinent to higher education institutions in Kenya is the gender issue. For the very first time, women are leading Kenyatta University and Jomo Kenyatta University. These two universities have joined USIU and Nazarene University which have had female vice chancellors for many years. What is unique about the state of the first two universities is that they are public universities while the latter are private. Is there some impact on leadership effectiveness by gender?

Research by Gallup Poll in the USA as to whether one would prefer a man or a woman as their boss has shown positive results for male consistently for respondents of both sexes at all time points from 1953 to 2000. Some people postulate that male dominance of public leadership is a cultural universal. To that effect, prejudice against women in leadership positions can be explained by gender roles comprised of people's beliefs about women and men. It has been shown by research that leaders perform more effectively when the leader role they occupy is congruent with their gender role. To that effect women suffer diminished outcomes in roles given masculine definitions and men suffer somewhat poor in roles given feminine definitions (Eagly, 2005). Women leaders therefore need to aware of this prejudice and how it impacts on results. Those aware ensure they employ **Transformational Leadership Styles** to overcome the prejudice.

Jooste (2004) defines transformational leadership as inspiring and influencing ordinary people to do extraordinary things. To that effect, the transformational leaders will strive to create trust among their followers. They will develop leadership qualities in others. They will seek to achieve objectives that are beyond their own immediate needs as well as the group. Finally, they will treat people as individuals. This way of the use of leadership style to overcome factors impacting on the performance brings us to one other important aspect of leadership at the higher education level in Kenya: tribalism. It has been noted that universities in Kenya have become citadels of tribal conclaves (Muchara, 2009). Virtually all public universities outside Nairobi are currently being led by individuals coming from tribes that the said university is based. The top leadership for positions such as deans, chairs and administrative positions are also manned by home "boys and girls." This scenario is being replicated every time a national university is opening a satellite campus. This

kind of leadership cannot be expected to raise the performance of universities any higher than a village polytechnic. Clearly, the people charged with authority are not treating their subordinates as individuals for the result is condemning many excellent workers to career stagnation as mediocre individuals get promoted on account of the tribe they come from. What this behaviour will lead to are **Toxic Leaders**.

Toxic Leaders have been found to be plenty in the world. Their destructive behaviours include: leaving their followers worse off than they found them, sometimes eliminating many of their own people; violating the basic standard of human rights; consciously feeding their followers illusions that enhance their (leaders) power and impair their followers capacity to act independently; playing to the basest fears and needs of followers; promoting incompetence; identifying scapegoats; setting others against others; failing to nurture leaders; subverting structures; stifling constructive criticism; and misleading followers through deliberate untruths, among others. These Toxic Leaders are characterised by lack of integrity-cynical, corrupt hypocritical, untrustworthy; having insatiable ambition for power, glory and fortune; enormous egos; arrogance preventing acknowledging one's mistakes and blame others; cowardice that leads to shrink from the difficult choices and failure both to understand the nature of relevant problems and to act competently and effectively in leadership situations (Lipman, 2005).

What we see in Toxic Leaders is the fear of losing power whether political, economic, social or intellectual without recognising that there is enough power to go around (Muchara, 2008). While it has been said that we tolerate toxic leaders due to some psychological factors such as our fear of ostracism, isolation and social death (Lipman, 2005), it would be useful if those charged with positions of authority learnt how to avoid being Toxic Leaders. One way is to aspire to become what Collins (2001) calls **Level 5 Executives**. These are individuals who have built enduring greatness in organisations through a paradoxical combination of personal humility plus professional will. The Level 5 Executives are said to be a study in duality: modest and willful; shy and fearless.

They display tremendous professional will, never wavering, never doubting, never second-guessing. They have ambitions not for themselves but for their companies hence selecting superb successors. They look out of the window to apportion credit for success, such as colleagues or good product and if they cannot find specific person or event, they credit luck. At same time, they look at the mirror to themselves to assign responsibility, never citing bad luck or external factors for bad performance. In the process, they live organisations that are performing at great levels and the organisations continue doing so long after they leave. This person is much higher than what Collins sees as an **Effective Leader** who catalyses commitment to and vigorous pursuit of a clear and compelling vision by stimulating the group to high performance standards.

The selection of the top leadership of the universities will require rethinking if we are to achieve Level Five Performance. One factor that has impacted on the performance is the disconnect between the administration staff and the top from the teaching fraternity. One complaint made by several workers is the level of arrogance of the vice chancellors, deans and chairs. This could be explained by the level of education that the individuals possess viewed against administration or service staff. But the education is supposed to provide humility, not arrogance. What one discovers is that most individuals charged with the responsibility of managing various departments or even the university were just good lecturers. Their knowledge of management and leadership is highly impaired. To cover their inadequacies, they hide behind arrogance in ignorance where some are heard boasting how they know nothing of say accounts, and have no wish knowing. Some will be good only in the subject they teach, and apart of putting down up coming lecturers in that subject, they will not bother to find out what is needed in other subjects even when they are chair of a department or dean of a school. Just like other institutions such as hospitals are now searching for individuals who are not doctors to lead them, time maybe has come when positions of Vice Chancellors and Deans was not reserved for academicians but for corporate leaders who are able to inspire the whole institution or school to highs of performance excellence.

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